In fact, a strange rose perfume hung in the air...

That well was filled with a silvery fluid that had a pink tint.

I came to the well the next day, as that alchemist had requested.

ACT VIII :
KARAKURI *
MACHINERY

"ARLEQUINO'S ARRIVAL"

Then there was also this strange puppet.

WHAT RUBBISH !!!

I DON'T SEE WHY YOU ARE GETTING SO UPSET, NARUMI ...

THAT CRACKPOT ALCHEMIST ...

...WAS COMPLETELY IRRESPON-SIBLE!!!

SHE HAS 580 BASIC MOVEMENTS, MULTIPLIED BY AS MANY FINGERS AND TOES AS YOU HAVE!!! AN IDIOT LIKE YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO MANIPULATE HER!!!

MY OLYMPIA ?!

TELL ME, GUY... THAT BIG DOLL OF YOURS, "OLYMPIC WHAT-CHAMACALLIT"... CAN YOU LEND IT TO ME? I WANNA USE IT!

INDEED ...

I GUESS YOU'D NEVER SEEN THAT KIND OF PUPPET BEFORE, RIGHT?

HEHE... AND YET, THAT WAS NEVER A PROBLEM FOR US.

IF THAT ALCHEMIST KNEW SO MUCH ABOUT LIFE, HE SHOULDA KNOWN THAT SIMPLE PEASANTS LEFT BY THEMSELVES WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO TAKE REVENGE BY FIGHTING THOSE AUTOMATONS!

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT! SO THAT ALCHEMIST FORCED HIS BIG PUPPET INTO LUCILLE'S HANDS, THEN SAID, "I'LL CURE YOU, THEN YOU FIGURE THE REST OUT FOR YOURSELF"!

OBVIOUSLY! YOU CAN SEE THAT HIS HAIR AND EVEN HIS EYES DID NOT CHANGE COLOR! MAYBE THE AQUA VITAE DOESN'T HAVE ANY EFFECT ON IDIOTS...

HMM

SAY, GUY... IF NARUMI IS ASKING THIS QUESTION, THAT MEANS HE IS NOT LIKE US AT ALL.

AH?!

WHY IS THAT?

AND I IMMEDIATELY UNDERSTOOD WHY THE ALCHEMIST HAD NOT EXPLAINED ANYTHING.

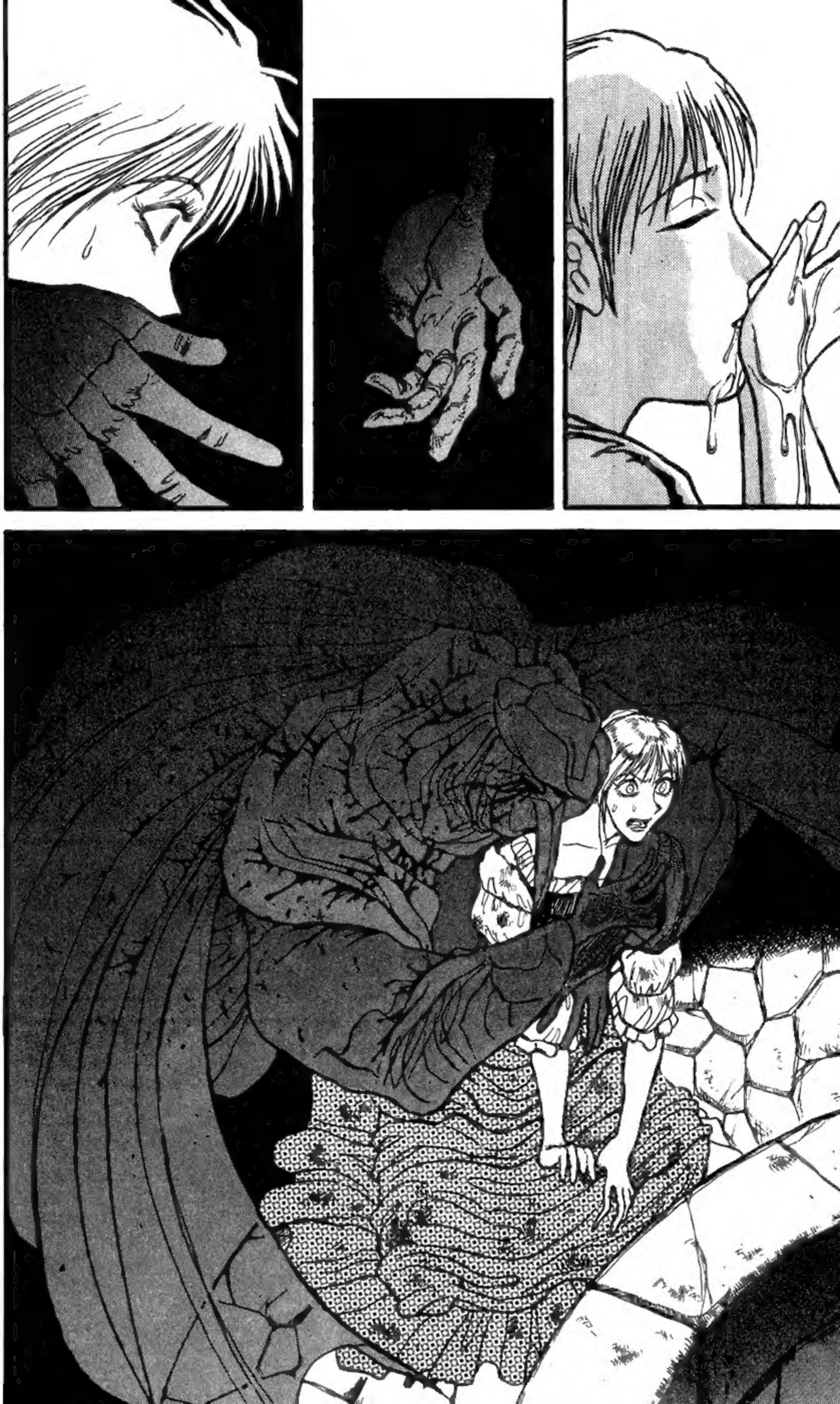
THUS, I DRANK THE AQUA VITAE FROM THE WELL.

?

YOU ARE NOT CALM, NARUMI!

STOP THOSE HUSH-HUSH CONVER-SATIONS! RIGHT NOW, I'M KEEPING MY CALM!

EXPLAIN TO ME, NOW!



A SURGE OF INFORMATION APPEARED IN MY HEAD.

ALCHEMICAL KNOWLEDGE!

NUMEROUS LANGUAGES!

TRAVELING AND SURVIVAL TECH-NIQUES!

I had become someone else.

At that exact moment ...

THE BASIC STRUCTURES OF AUTO-MATONS!

THEIR MATERI-ALS...

CHAR-ACTER-ISTICS ...

WAY OF THINKING ...

AND WEAK-NESSES.

AND ALSO THE VARIOUS MANIPULATION TECHNIQUES OF STRINGED PUPPETS WHICH HAD BEEN CREATED...

...IN ORDER TO DECIMATE THE AUTO-MATONS, BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EACH OF THEIR WEAK-NESSES.

AND ...

I ALSO FELT...

"AND AUTOMATONS TO SIMPLE PUPPETS!"

"DUST MUST RETURN TO DUST"

It was an overwhelming feeling! This feeling of hate inside me was without a doubt much stronger than the combined anger of every inhabitant of my village!

ALL AUTO-MATONS!

DESTROY THEM!

ANNIHILATE THEM!

WE WERE POSSESSED BY THE UNWAVERING WILL OF A SINGLE PERSON!

ALL THOSE WHO DRANK THE AQUA VITAE FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE SAME STATE AS ME...

To pursue automatons and destroy them...

...became the only joy in our lives.

We progressively lost all human feeling...

As well as all desire.

WAIT A MINUTE... THEN WHAT ABOUT ME?!

I WAS SAVED BY THE AQUA VITAE!

I HAVE ALREADY TOLD YOU ABOUT THIS, TOO.

BUT YOU CAN ALSO ABSORB KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS FROM SOMEONE ELSE?

SO... BY DRINKING THE AQUA VITAE...

NOT ONLY DOES IT CURE ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME,

I'M HITTING YOU!

POF!

BUT IT MAY ALSO BE BECAUSE IMBECILES AND INFERIOR BEINGS CANNOT...

I SUPPOSE IT IS LARGELY BECAUSE OF YOUR ARTIFICIAL ARM, WHICH MUST HAVE ABSORBED THE MAJORITY OF THE AQUA VITAE THAT YOU SWALLOWED.

YOU ARE THE ONLY SHIROGANE WHO IS NOT DOMINATED BY THE AQUA VITAE.

I THINK YOU ARE AN EXCEPTION, THAT IS ALL!

WAS IT...

SO, THIS "SPIRIT" THAT DOMINATED YOU, WHO WAS IT?

BUT ...

...AFTER DRINKING THE AQUA VITAE.

WE SHIROGANES QUICKLY UNDERSTOOD, THANKS TO THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH BECAME OURS...

...ALL CALL OURSELVES "SHIRO-GANE"?

IN YOUR OPINION, WHY DO WE, DESTROYERS OF ALITO-MATONS...

NARUMI.

AQUA VITAE IS NOT JUST AN "ALL-POWERFUL" LIQUID.

A LARGE QUANTITY OF AQUA VITAE CAN MELT ANY SUBSTANCE.

IRON...

WOOD...

AND EVEN... A HUMAN BEING.

IN ORDER TO CREATE GOLD FROM ANOTHER METAL, THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF ALCHEMY,

ONE MUST FIRST MELT METAL.

WHEN SUCH A THING HAPPENS, THE AQUA VITAE CONTAINS THE SOUL OF THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN DISSOLVED IN IT FOREVER.

THAT IS WHY WE ARE TECHNI-CALLY NOT "INDIVIDUALS" ANYMORE.

WE DRANK THE AQUA VITAE... AS WELL AS THE "SPIRIT" OF THIS TRAVELING ALCHEMIST.

THOSE WHO THEN DRINK THIS BREW ARE DOMINATED BY THE WILL OF THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN DISSOLVED IN IT.

WE BECAME REPLICAS OF "SHIROGANE"!

PALANG

WHO'S THERE ?!

!

YOU, THE NEW SHIRO-GANE...

THAT WAS A MOST INTERESTING STORY.

VOLONG

THIS IS OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER.

MY NAME IS ARLEQUINO...

AND I AM ONE OF THE OLDEST SERVANTS OF MISTRESS FRANCINE!

BUT...

HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?

HI HI HI HI! YOUR SECURITY SYSTEM IS GETTING OLD!

IN THE OLD DAYS, THE SHIROGANE HEADQUARTERS WERE IMPREGNABLE!

THAT'S RIGHT! BUT TODAY...

...WE WERE ABLE TO GET IN SO EASILY!

I AM KENISS!

THE RULES OF ETIQUETTE DICTATE THAT WE INTRODUCE OURSELVES!

HUH HUH HUH

SCHLAK

L-ALING

AND I, ANOSS!

VIOU VIOU

VIOU

HUH?! DAMN YOU, GUY!

WE'RE GONNA CRUSH YOU!!!

YOU, TOO, LITTLE AMATEUR JUGGLERS!

ARLEQUINO... IT HAS BEEN A WHILE!

GRRR... YOU'RE MEMBERS OF THE MIDNIGHT CIRCUS?!

AH...

KENISS, ANOSS... I ONLY CAME TO SEE WHAT THAT BIG ASIAN SHIROGANE LOOKED LIKE.

YES...

TAN...

TAN...

TAN...

THEY DO NOT KNOW HOW TO BEHAVE.

MY APOLO-GIES.

THE ONES WHO PLUNGED HER VILLAGE INTO ETERNAL HELL?!

...THAT'S ONE OF THE MONSTERS THAT LUCILLE JUST TALKED ABOUT?

SO...

I'M HAVING TROUBLE HOLDING BACK AFTER WHAT I JUST HEARD...

WHAT DO I CARE?! I'M WARNING YOU, DON'T GET ANY CLOSER TO ME...

...HAD BLACK HAIR AND EYES?

DID YOU KNOW THAT OUR CREATOR ALSO...

NOR ARE YOUR EYES!

HO HOOO! YOUR HAIR IS NOT SILVER-COLORED!

OLYMPIA!

NARUMI, MOVE OVER! SHIROGANES DO NOT NEED TO SPEAK WITH AUTOMATONS!

ZA

WE RESPECT THE RULES OF ETIQUETTE... IF YOU ACT THIS WAY, KENISS AND ANOSS WILL HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF YOU.

YEEHAW!

HAVE FUN!

ARLE-QUINO!

PFFT ...

LUCILLE, SURELY YOU HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN...

...THAT WEAPONS ARE POWERLESS AGAINST US.

SCHLAC

AND YOUR RIDICULOUS STRINGED PUPPET?

GONE FISHING.

I KNOW IT VERY WELL.

...TO SHOW MYSELF IN FRONT OF MY HUSBAND, MY SON AND ALL THE VILLAGERS, WHEN I JOIN THEM IN HELL!!!

AHDAHDAH

I WILL NOT HAVE THE COURAGE ...

IF I DO NOT TRY ANYTHING AGAINST YOU RIGHT NOW...

WOW!

GRRR!

DAMMIT! I DIDN'T EVEN SEE HIM MOVE! HOW DID HE MOVE SO FAST?!

GO OH

SAH

THIS IS WHERE WE PART WAYS.

IT'S TOO BAD, LUCILLE...

HOOO? INTER-ESTING!

LET'S RUMBLE!